

THE WATER-CURE JOURNAL,

DEVOTED TO THE
EXPLANATION OF THE PHILOSOPHY AND PRACTICE OF
HYDROPATHY, OR THE WATER-CURE.

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"Wash and be Healed."  
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[WHOLE No. 16.]

DOMESTIC POISONS.

(From *Dr. Alcott's Library of Health*, of 1839.)

The following invaluable article from our friend *Dr. Alcott*, will be read with interest. The subject of which it treats should be deeply pondered by all—especially by parents.—[ED. JOUR.]

By *domestic poisons*, as we here use the term, we mean those poisons with which we are liable to come in contact, and from which great evil sometimes results, in the ordinary concerns of common life. We say nothing, properly so called, because we have already made them the subject of a distinct essay.*

The circumstances and duties of civilized life, whatever may be our situation, expose us, continually, to a greater or less degree of danger from poisonous substances. We doubt whether there is a family to be found, in city or country, of those at least who are above the most abject poverty, wholly unexposed.

We are not ignorant that we shall be met, at the very threshold, by a certain class of the community, with the very common objection, that almost every thing in nature contains more or less of poison; and that if a thing contained no

poison it would be of no value. Especially is this said in regard to most kinds of food and drink. The very grain and fruits which we eat, contain poison, we are told; and for proof, are referred to the fact, that from all these substances we can manufacture spirit.

Now we might, possibly, stop to combat this notion, but for two reasons. First, we have so often shown its fallacy, that it seems to us unnecessary; and, secondly, it is indulged by none but those who are ignorant of the first principles of chemistry, without reference to which, it is next to impossible to show them the nature of the error they have embraced. It must suffice, therefore, for us to say, that there is not—and never was—a particle of poison in any of these things to which we refer, as long as they are in a healthy and natural state.

In presenting for popular consideration a subject like that of Poisons, we wish it to be understood, at the outset, that it is no part of our intention to frighten people. On the contrary, it is, with us, quite a prominent object to save them from any necessity or danger of being frightened, should a case of poisoning occur even under their own immediate observation. We believe our instructions and cautions will tend to save life, rather than to destroy it.

We have said that, as a community, we

* See Health Tracts, No. 1, on Dosing and Drugging.

are very much exposed to poison. Let us give an example of what might very readily and naturally happen.

Suppose a young man—say a mechanic—from one of our most healthy families, is taken violently sick, with a strange and unmanageable disease. Perhaps he already has severe and painful vomitings, with a sense of suffocation; or at least he has a severe and painful constriction of the throat. Now those who are wholly uninformed on the subject of poisons, would hardly think of tracing the disease back to any circumstances connected with the history or employment of the sufferer; nor would the physician, even if a little more inquisitive than they, find it easy to arrive at the truth through the depths of their carelessness and ignorance.

And yet we venture to affirm, that no reflecting person who, having had the courage and the patience to follow us through our course of remarks, should afterward witness such a case of disease, would hesitate to say that there are no symptoms here mentioned but what may have been induced or aggravated by at least half a dozen poisons to which the community are daily exposed. We go still farther. We believe that if the whole community could be duly enlightened on this whole subject, a very large proportion of the stomach and bowel complaints of civilized, and especially of civic life, might be traced to poison of one form or another. Or at least, that if they do not originate in this way, they were at least aggravated by them.

Is it not, then, of the utmost importance, that the public mind should be properly enlightened and instructed? Is it still objected that such information would only alarm them to no purpose? Is it said, moreover, that those who are not alarmed will be greatly discouraged, even by the formidable list of poisons contained in this little tract? We do not believe that either the one or the other result will follow, in any great number of instances. We believe that, as a general rule, to which of course, as to other general rules, there may be exceptions, the tendency of light on a subject of so much importance to the happiness of the whole community, will be good, and good only.

It is in this view that we have gone forward in our work. We know of no cheap volume, now before the community, on poisons, in a popular form. We have endeavored to prepare, at much pains and expense, what we conceive to be a safe guide to the community, as far as it goes. It contains no theories of our own, or of any other person. It contains no abstract speculations. It contains nothing visionary. It is, in one word, the results of the experiments and observations of the most scientific and intelligent chemists, physicians and surgeons of our own and other countries.

Orfila,* a distinguished professor of chemistry and natural philosophy at Paris, and author of a large and small work on poison, includes under this general term a long list of medical preparations, *when given without the advice of a physician*; but for reasons which were mentioned in our first paragraph, the consideration of medicinal substances, for the present, forms no part of our plan.

Domestic poisons, as we have used the term in this essay, are of *mineral, vegetable, or animal* origin; and may, therefore, be solid, liquid or gaseous.

I. MINERAL POISONS.

Some of the most dangerous substances to which we are incessantly exposed, especially in families, are from the mineral kingdom. The more common of these, among the solid substances, are white lead, red lead, litharge, the compounds of tin, sugar of lead, zinc, copperas, verdigris, arsenic and saltpetre. Among the liquid and aeriform substances derived from or closely connected with the mineral kingdom, are the sulphurous acid, sulphuretted hydrogen gas, and nitric acid, or aqua fortis.

White Lead.—Perhaps it is sufficiently known to our readers, that lead itself, in a

* It was no part of our original intention, to mention the names of the individuals on whose authority our statements are made; both on account of the large amount of space it takes up in a tract, and because we thought it not improbable our readers would confide in our unvarnished story—believing we were in the possession of authorities. We have, however, in a few instances, departed from our first resolution, and have referred to authors, especially to Orfila.

pure state, is not poisonous. All its preparations, however, (of which there are twelve or more,) from the simple oxide* to the most concentrated salt,† are, in the language of modern chemistry, "insidious poisons." The very "appearance of this metal," says Fourcroy, "is sad, denoting its dangerous properties;" but this idea may perhaps be regarded as fanciful.

White lead, one of the most dangerous preparations of this article, is very largely used in the arts, especially as a paint. Its color and appearance are well known. It is most productive of disease to those who manufacture it, and to painters. Those who labor long in lead factories, become pale and sickly, and subject to colic of a peculiar and dangerous kind; to be described presently. We have had ample opportunity to witness the terrible consequences of working in lead factories, in the southern part of this city. Those who, by reason of a strong constitution, escape colic for the time, are apt, sooner or later, to be attacked by palsy.

The sufferings, however, of painters, potters, glassmakers, &c., from the fumes of white lead, or from working in it and handling it continually, are more certain, if possible, than of those who only manufacture it. So commonly are painters subject to colic from this cause, that the peculiar form of their disease has given rise in England and other countries to the name of painter's colic. The character which this dreadful disease puts on—making proper allowance for the age, constitution and habits, and other diseases of the person attacked—is in general as follows:

It begins with short attacks of colic pains, which become more and more frequent, of longer duration, and of greater severity; so great indeed as to be almost insupportable. The mouth is very dry; there is a frequent inclination to vomit; and sometimes the vomiting becomes vio-

lent. Joined to these symptoms is a most violent constipation of the bowels. The intestines themselves appear to be so convulsed or cramped, that nothing will pass; and indeed the very muscles on this part of the body are sometimes drawn into hard knots or lumps, and the whole region of the bowels becomes excessively painful to the touch. When the disease has reached this stage, if it is not speedily relieved, the spasms and pain become more and more insupportable; the costiveness becomes wholly unmanageable; the intestines become inflamed, and the bowels gangrenous, or, as we commonly say, mortified; and death ensues as a matter of course.

White lead, or carbonate of lead, is sometimes formed on the inside of vessels or pipes, where there is fermentation. If the lead becomes rusted or oxidized, the carbonic acid of cider, wine, beer, apple sauce, and other sauces, and even molasses—for this sometimes ferments in hot weather—may combine with it, to produce carbonate of lead; and this dissolved in the liquid or sauce, may become poisonous, and cause sickness and even death. A Mr. Eaton of Springfield lost his life two or three years since, by drinking cider drawn through lead pipes in which the change had taken place which we have been describing; and this is by no means a solitary instance of the kind.

Whether water itself is ever much injured by being carried through lead pipes, is quite another question. If the pipes were always perfectly full, so as never to be exposed to the air, we have many doubts whether poison would or could be generated in them. But this is not always the case; and on this account, as well as several others, lead pipes seem to us wholly unsafe.*

We can readily conceive how white lead may become exceedingly injurious by accident. The reader will observe that we do not say it has been often injurious in this way; but only that it may become so.

Suppose a country retailer of West In-

* An oxide of a metal is, in general terms, a rust. The rusts of metals are indeed invariably oxides, but some oxides could hardly be called rusts. Such a definition, however, will answer very well our present purpose.

† By a salt, in chemistry, is meant any body formed by the union of an acid with it. Thus, white lead is formed by the union of carbonic acid with metallic lead.

* Since the above was prepared for the press, a distinguished physician in Boston informed us that he had, at that moment, two patients in a family in this city, whose sickness was evidently induced by drinking water which had been conveyed in lead pipes.

dia goods, flour, &c., has in his shop a cask of white lead, from which he is taking out, every day or two, for his customers. Presently somebody comes in for a parcel of it, and in weighing it out, it becomes necessary to throw back a little of it into the cask. Instead, however, of throwing it into the cask, the careless clerk throws it into the flour barrel standing near it; its contents closely resembling it, in color.

Presently a parcel of flour is bought and made into bread, and eaten by some neighboring family. One of them is soon taken sick; then another, and another; and finally, perhaps, one or two of them die. Will any one—even the physician—suspect the cause? Will it not be construed into a judgment of just Heaven?*

It is hardly necessary to say anything here of the carelessness of those merchants and their clerks, who weigh white lead and flour in the same scales, without so much as brushing them out, in one instance in ten of their use; both because we do not believe the quantity of lead which in this way would be mixed with flour would be sufficient to produce much mischief, and because also we hope the instances of such slovenly carelessness are very rare.

There are other uses of white lead which expose us to disease, but those which have been mentioned are among the more common and important.

Red Lead.—This is an oxide of lead, or is prepared rather from one of its oxides; and is much used in painting. It is exceedingly poisonous; but its color is such that it is less liable to be taken into the stomach by accident than white lead. Red lead is sometimes put into wafers. Of this every one may satisfy himself, at once, by fastening them on the point of a pin, and burning them over a sheet of clean white paper, on which the lead, in the form of pure metallic globules, will be precipitated. We do not say that all red-wafers contain red lead; but those which are of the deepest color almost always do, so far as we have examined them.

And yet many individuals—particularly clerks—are in the daily habit of eating wafers; and we cannot doubt that a part of our diseases of the stomach and bowels have their origin in this very cause.

Some three or four years since, it was stated in the London *Lancet*, a well known and highly distinguished medical journal, that the secretary of a public institution in England had recently been "twice attacked with a violent salivation, so as to render medical aid indispensable, from his having wafered five hundred circulars with red wafers, which he had wetted in his mouth."

Litharge is an orange red substance, prepared also from lead by oxidizing it; and is poisonous, like the former. The particular oxide from which both these substances are prepared, is called *massicot*. This is of a lively brown color.

All these substances—read lead, litharge, and massicot—from their known cheapness, are much used as pigments or paints, and especially in making confectionary. It is asked whether confectioners do not know that they are poisons? We reply that we cannot tell. It should, however, be remembered, that not all the dealers in confectionaries in our cities and towns are manufacturers of it. Many of them do not manufacture any thing they sell. Somebody, however, must be the manufacturers; but whether with or without consciences, we cannot say.

That these poisonous oxides are indeed used in the preparation of confectionary, we have the authority of Dr. Fothergill, who complained of it in his day; nor are we without authority in more modern times. Many a time have individuals, and sometimes whole families, been so poisoned by the frosting of confectionary, as to be made severely sick at once. In general, the quantity used in coloring small toys is so inconsiderable, that the poisonous effects are not immediately obvious, especially in the case of children, who are very tenacious of life. No doubt the stomach and all the organs concerned in digestion are more or less disturbed by it, and their whole lining membrane more or less inflamed, even when there is no sensible pain. This is certainly the case, if the experiments of Dr. Beaumont can be

* Since writing the above, we have heard of a case in the western part of this state, exactly in point. It occurred several years ago. No one died, it is true; but one person who was poisoned is a sufferer to the present time. We could give names were it necessary.

at all relied on; and we know not that they have ever been questioned.

One of the more striking instances of poisoning by the frosting of confectionary took place in New York, March 20, 1835. A family of five persons had bought a cake at a confectionary shop, and eaten of it with considerable freedom. Soon afterwards they were all taken violently sick, and for several hours their lives were in the most imminent danger; they, however, at length recovered. The remainder of the cake was examined by Drs. Hosack and Rogers; and on analyzing the colored ornaments of the upper portion of the cake, called the frosting, they found it to be one fifth part rank poison. We are unable to state from recollection which of the oxides of lead was found; but we believe several of them were used, according to the colors.

There is one extensive use made of the various oxides of lead, which exposes the community to a great deal of suffering, unless proper care is taken to prevent it. We allude to the custom of glazing, with these oxides, the red earthen ware, so much in use in many parts of the country. Its comparative cheapness holds out a temptation to the poorer and middling classes of our population to buy it, while their ignorance of the fact that it is glazed with lead, and of the first principles of chemical science, exposes them to be poisoned by it;—thus rendering true the proverb of the wise man, that the destruction of the poor is their poverty. For what is saved in the purchase of the cheaper utensils is perhaps often worse than lost—yea, ten times told, if not a hundred—in the expense to which they are subjected, in the form of bills for physicians, attendants of the sick, &c., and in the loss of time and health, which is still more ruinous. Is it not known that a very large proportion of the diseases which afflict humanity, fall on the poor?

Is it asked how the glazing can be disengaged from the inside of our earthen ware, so as to prove injurious? Any common acid, especially the carbonic and the acetic, if it comes in contact with it, will at once dissolve it. Who has not seen large portions of the glazing of deep earthen pots in which pickles and sauces are kept, entirely removed? The oxide of

lead in these portions of glazing had been acted upon by the acid, and had combined with it to form acetate of lead—*sugar of lead*—or the carbonate of lead, already described; and the latter had been dissolved again in the substances which the jars contained, and had probably been eaten by somebody.

We have spoken of the evils which result from breathing the fumes of white lead. Of the more common evils of using the acetate or sugar of lead, we shall speak hereafter. At present we wish to add a few remarks on the use of lead in general; and a few facts to illustrate its danger.

Orfila says that “kitchen utensils made with this metal should be banished, because it is attacked by several culinary acids, which dissolve it, producing salts which are poisonous.” He might have said, with equal truth, that our red earthen ware glazed with the oxides of lead ought to be banished; for it is so unsafe, especially in the hands of the ignorant, that its use ought not to be retained.

He adds, moreover—“It is very dangerous to drink water that has been kept for a long time in leaden vessels exposed to the air:—if the effects of poison do not immediately follow, it is not long before the person experiences disastrous symptoms, which may even terminate in death. It is equally necessary to avoid drinking well water drawn in leaden buckets. And unhappy consequences have been observed in persons who have drank of rain water, that had been conveyed by leaden pipes, or which had fallen upon roofs covered with this metal, and afterwards been retained in vessels.”

We have already described, pretty fully, the painter's colic, produced by breathing, for a considerable time, the fumes of white lead, and by handling it also for some time; and have at the same time more than intimated that there is a degree of poisoning from lead which falls much short of this alarming condition. The truth is, that the symptoms of poisoning by lead vary exceedingly, though the more general symptoms of diseases from long inhaling it, are those we have described. When any of the preparations of lead—such as can be dissolved in water—are received

into the stomach, in considerable quantity, the following, says Orfila, are the usual consequences :

"The patient experiences a sugary, astriquent, metallic, disagreeable taste; a constriction of the throat; pains more or less acute in the region of the stomach; inclination to vomit; obstinate, painful, and often bloody vomitings;—in short, all the symptoms which result from an inflammation of the stomach."

Perhaps there is not on record a more striking instance of the terrible mischiefs which may result from the use of lead for culinary purposes, than one which is mentioned by Dr. Eberle, in his *Therapeutics, and Materia Medica*. As we have presented a full account of it in the *Library of Health*, vol. i. page 221, perhaps it is unnecessary to say more than that the inhabitants of Elizabethtown, in Pennsylvania, in the fall of the year 1814, suffered severely from a severe colic, of which many fell victims; but which had its origin in one of the causes of disease we have mentioned in the foregoing paragraphs. The people had supplied themselves with red earthen ware from a new pottery in that vicinity, in which they had put up their apple sauce. The acid of the apple sauce acting on the lead glazing of the pots, sugar of lead, or carbonate of lead was generated—perhaps both—and the deplorable results followed to which we have alluded.

A case nearer home than this occurred about a year ago. The mother of a child seven days old, in a family with which we were intimately acquainted, having drank water from a pail just painted on the inside with a paint prepared with white lead, the child was taken the following night with nausea, pain and vomiting, and seemed to suffer severely.

Many people set their milk in red earthen pans. This is highly dangerous; for the slightest change in the milk will generate acidity; a portion of the lead of the glazing will be dissolved, and a diseased state of the stomach and bowels will be the consequence.

(To be continued.)

A meal well-timed, and of proper quantity and quality, never causes the least discomfort.

WATER-CURE PROCESSES.*

[Continued from page 43.]

Shower Bath.

The shower is one of the best forms of bath for daily use, provided an abundance of water can be had. There are many of these used in New York since the introduction of the Croton, and more particularly since the subject of water is of late receiving a greater share of attention. One advantage of the bath of this kind is, that it can be taken so quickly; and then also the constant shower of water is so cleansing and invigorating.

In this, as in every kind of bath, the head should be the part first to commence upon. If the hair is long, it can be guarded by a close oil-cloth, or India rubber cap, but always the face, temples and neck, should first be wet. This prevents the blood from rushing to the head—an objection that has been made to the shower bath. If one is highly sensitive to the impression of cold, the shower will be more bearable, provided loud and continued exclamation be practised while under the bath. The exertion seems to keep the blood outward. Brisk motion, as dancing and jumping, with friction, should be at the same time resorted to, and then the body should be quickly rubbed dry, and exercise be taken, or a weak person can go to a warm bed. The body should be made thoroughly comfortable.

We have known weak invalids who had scarcely ever taken a cold bath, to commence in midwinter with the shower, beginning in the morning immediately on coming from a warm bed, and in the course of a few weeks, such persons have gained an amount of health and strength which, for years, they had not known. Rheumatism, incipient gout, giddiness, indigestion, with its long train of symptoms, and the like, have often in a remarkably short time been removed; and individuals of a pale, sickly and sallow look, have acquired the ruddiness and bloom of youth.

In a few instances, those who were weak and sensitive to cold, have been taken with a sudden neuralgic or rheumatic "twinge."

* From "*Hydropathy, or the Water-Cure.*" Compiled by Joel Shew, M. D. Wiley & Putnam, New-York.

but this is oftener than otherwise caused by the bath being continued too long, or the person not keeping up sufficient exercise and friction. This generally passes off at once, and has never, in our experience, been alarming. Still it should be avoided.

A Bath for every one.

An intelligent correspondent writes us of an ingenious contrivance for bathing, as follows:—"I purchased three yards of twilled cotton, cut it in two pieces, had them sewed together; then I got enough old rope (about the size of my finger,) to go round it, and had my square piece of cotton cloth bordered all about its four sides, with the rope. I then took it to the painter, and had it oiled over on one side on two coats, and dried. This made me a perfect bathing mat. I place a pail of water upon it, and with a sponge I wash all over. After I have done, I take it up by the four corners and pour out the water. It is wiped and folded up. When I travel, this always goes with me, upon my trunk." This individual knows well the power of water, for after having suffered for many years from a rheumatic complaint which had resisted the best of medical treatment, he was cured in a few months by water.

How often should a Bath be taken?

We know of no exception to the rule that a bath should be taken daily. Every sick person, in whatever condition, or however weak they may be, should have the whole body rubbed over with wet cloths, sponges, or the like, at least once every day. In some cases great caution will be needed that it be done safely. Let those who have lain for days upon a sick bed without any ablution, as is generally the case in the common practice of medicine, try, when the body is warm, the rubbing it all over, little by little, following briskly with dry cloths, and then covering the parts warmly, according to the feelings of comfort, and they will find it a most powerful tonic, and an application productive of great comfort. Physicians have yet many simple lessons of this kind to learn.

We repeat, every individual, old and young, male and female, sick or well, should have a daily bath. And in case of

indisposition, instead of less attention to bathing, bathing the more should be given. There is no condition in which Nature would say "stop;" but rather she asks at our hand assistance.

Vapor Baths.

Among those who advocate and practise water-cure, there seems to be a general opinion that vapor-baths are injurious. The objection most commonly made is, that the vapor too much excites the circulation, causes a rushing of blood to the head, and by this undue excitation or stimulation the body becomes weakened. It is an easy matter to cause injury by vapor baths. If it is made too powerful, or is too long continued, severe head-ache, and even fainting, may be caused. But this is the abuse. If a patient is wrapped in a dry blanket or a wet sheet to perspire, precisely the same injurious effects can easily be caused. With a good apparatus, there is no difficulty in regulating the vapor-bath so that it will be as mild as one pleases,—as mild in temperature even, as the wet sheet in the way ordinarily used to cause mild perspiration.

It has been objected, that in vapor-baths the heat is from a foreign substance, and that, therefore, it must be debilitating and weakening. But the same objection may be made respecting the sweating blanket or the wet sheet causing perspiration. The natural heat of the body being 98° F., there is constantly passing off in every direction a considerable amount of heat, unless it is in some way obstructed; but if this heat is obstructed, as by the non-conducting blankets, as used in the wet sheet or sweating envelopement, and is retained at the surface of the body, or is thrown back upon the surface, the effect is not different from what it would be if the same amount of heat from any other source were applied in a similar way.

In many cases, we are confident from experience, that a vapor-bath suitably arranged, with a cool or cold bath after it, is better than to lay for hours in an envelopement. The time thus gained by the vapor-bath is very valuable for exercise in the open air, and is often better than for the patient to be laying in a room perhaps not over well ventilated, as is generally the case.

To prevent too much blood at the head, a cold wet cloth, or a frequent washing the head and temples in cold water, is very useful. A head-ache or faintness are the first symptoms denoting that the bath is too powerful. The vapor-bath should never be used in such a way as to cause head-ache or faintness. Such effects are never needed, and are always more or less pernicious.

The Thompsonians, or "steam doctors," as they are sometimes called, have been unmercifully and ignorantly vilified by many whose ignorance in certain cases superseded that of the ignorant ones among the "steamers," in proportion as it was more "scientific." Who does not know that the Thompsonian has often relieved patients in a most remarkable manner, when the "scientific" practitioner was compelled to "give up." A good vapor-bath, and a thorough cleansing of the skin, will often cause such speedy relief, that it is reckoned an accident rather than otherwise that relief is obtained. The remedy appears too simple to cause any marked result.

Physicians generally seem to think it a thing of little consequence to pay any regard to the skin. Day after day, week after week, and month after month, patients are allowed to lay suffering for want of a cleansing of the skin; and in cases, too, where such a cleansing of the skin would cause more sudden relief than any thing else that can be done. We knew a physician of very extensive practice who had under treatment a person with obstinate fever. After having done his utmost without any good success, he thought he would try vapor "to get up an action," as it was called, and to do this some common barrel hoops were cut in two, and the half hoops were placed over the patient in bed to elevate the clothes, and then by hot stones or bricks wound in wet cloths, placed under the bedding thus elevated, a genial pleasant vapor was caused all about the body, and thus, by this simple means, the patient was at once greatly benefited. It was just the thing needed. The patient rapidly recovered.

We lately had a patient who had been treated many months, and who on leaving home, was given by his physician written

directions, and to "wind up," it was recommended that by all means he should take vapor-baths, should he be where they could be obtained—as if a vapor-bath could not be had any where. He had been treated all this time without any. It is easy to give a bath of this kind in the following way: A number of bricks or stones are heated red hot. The patient is to sit upon a cane-bottom, or open-work chair, (the clothing being removed,) with a couple of woolen or other blankets pinned about the neck. A-vessel of water, (a common tin pan is as good as any thing,) is placed under the chair, and into this water the hot bricks or stones are to be dipped, little by little, so that the vapor rises from the surface of the water. The body can thus be easily brought into perspiration.

The ancient Romans frequently used the vapor-bath, and the cold one immediately following. The Russians go from vapor-baths even at 150° F., and plunge in very cold water, or roll in the snow. Wm. Penn saw the vapor-bath and the cold immersion used with remarkable success among the Indians of our own country; and at the present day, among the red men of the forest, the vapor is an important agent in the treatment of a variety of diseases.

Tepid, Warm and Hot Applications of Water.

One great objection to the new system, is the supposed *chilling* effect of the treatment. It is supposed by many that the new mode consists wholly of horrible applications of *cold* water. Physicians themselves are not always over-particular in avoiding exaggeration on this point. It is found to be quite a good "bug-bear," with which to frighten people, by basely stating that weak infants, children and old persons are all to be subjected to the one horrible thing—*cold water*.

In many cases no cold water at all is used, unless it be a little in the way of drink. It may be laid down as a rule, that whenever warm or hot applications are more agreeable to the feelings of the patient in subduing severe pain, as in severe colics, certain inflammations of the bowels, cramps in the stomach and bowels, pain in the back, pleurisy, or pain within

the ribs or chest, &c., &c., the best rule we know of is to consult the feelings of the patient. If there is high, burning inflammation, cold applications will be the most agreeable, and the best; but when there is pain without high, burning inflammation, the warm or hot applications are to be used. Let the following case illustrate:

An individual had eaten too heartily at dinner, and of food in his case indigestible. Very improperly, a full supper was taken upon this indigestible dinner, which soon caused, in the stomach and bowels, an excruciating colicky pain. In similar cases, the man had removed the difficulty by clysters and vomiting, caused by lukewarm water. At this time, however, these means failed, giving only partial relief. The author being called, he directed that the patient have warm bricks to his feet, and at once large towels folded over, to be slightly wrung out of water as hot as could be borne, and applied all over the abdomen and a part of the chest. These were changed unremittingly, as hot and as often as the patient desired, and very soon brought relief,—sooner than could have been done by any drug opiate whatever. The bowels were also again freely purged, and the acid and indigestible substances removed from the stomach by much drinking of tepid water. After all pain was removed, and the stomach and bowels were well cleansed with pure clean water, it would have been well to have applied the tepid wet sheet to sleep in. This not being convenient, and not being very essential, it was omitted. A good night's rest was obtained. The individual lived nearly fasting the next day, drinking, however, a large quantity of water, mostly with the chill off, and then returned gradually and cautiously to a more full diet, and thus avoided all pain. In inflammation of the stomach and bowels, in almost every case where those frightful relapses take place, impropriety in food is the cause. In this case, had not relief been soon given, there would inevitably have resulted a violent inflammation—in the stomach and bowels, always a most formidable disease.

A medical friend whom we highly esteem—a man who is never afraid to break away from old usages, provided he can see a better way, lately informed the writer,

that in a case of most excruciating cholice which fell under his treatment, when ordinary means had failed to bring relief, he caused the man quickly to be wrapped in a blanket wet in hot water, and this simple application caused immediate relief. It is astonishing to witness what can be often done by so simple a means to relieve pain. The same principle was used by the ancients to some extent, and has been more or less through all periods of time. The relief caused by applying the warm skin of an animal just slain, or by putting the patient into the warm carcass of an animal, an ancient mode, is upon the principle of warmth and moisture to soothe.

To propose a warm or tepid sheet would perhaps only excite the ridicule of some who advocate water-cure. But it is certain that these are sometimes the best. We sometimes prescribe warm wet sheets, for there are cases in which it would not be safe to apply the cold one. It is not productive of any sort of good for a weak person to lay shivering in a cold wet sheet an hour or more, hoping afterwards to get warm. Injury has been done by such means. It may be laid down as a rule, that when the body is cold, it should not be made colder, but instead it should be made warmer; and if this cannot be done by natural means, as by exercise, then artificial means should be used. Still the direct effort of heat is always weakening. The question then, in warm or hot applications, is, whether they are not, on the whole, of evils the least.

Warm and hot foot-baths are often very useful. But in such uses of water, a cold application following should be used to counteract the weakening and relaxing effect of heat.

Temperature of Baths, &c.

Sensations from water alter very considerably, according to the temperature of the atmosphere, state of health, &c., &c. Hot baths are from 98° F., the temperature of the blood, upwards. Warm baths are generally reckoned from 92° to 95°; tepid, below 92°. A tepid bath to one, may appear cold to another. As a rule, the colder the bath, if well borne, the better. The direct effect of warm baths is to weaken. Whenever they are taken, the

time should be very short, and they should be immediately followed by a cold plunge, dash, shower, or at least rubbing with a cold wet cloth. It is well known by some housekeepers, that "washing day" can be borne with much less fatigue if most of the water used be cool or cold.

As to different sensations, here is a curious fact. Atmosphere 55° F.; body comfortable. Took three basins of water at 60°, 70°, and 80°. Placed one hand in the water at 60°, the other in the water at 80°. Let them remain 30 seconds, and then placed both hands in the water at 70°: to one it was cold, to the other warm.

It is said that in a road over the Andes, at about half-way between the foot and summit, there is a cottage, in which the ascending and descending travellers meet; the former, who have just quitted the sultry valleys at the base, are so relaxed that the sudden diminution of temperature produces in them a feeling of intense cold; while the latter, who left the frozen summits of the mountain, are overcome by distressing sensations of extreme heat.

Cautions in the use of Water.

Every one knows water may be made the means of great mischief. According to the celebrated Dr. Currie, of Liverpool, water may be safely used at any time when there is no sense of chilliness present, when the heat of the surface is steadily above what is natural, and when there is no general or profuse perspiration. For a full bath, general affusion and drinking, these rules were by Dr. C. deemed fully sufficient for safety; and yet we are often told, that such men as Dr. C. and Priessnitz can manage water safely and with it do wonders, but that practitioners in general would not be able to make those nice distinctions, and would consequently do much mischief. Better by far, had it been if drugs were no more dangerous than water.

To the above may be added, as a rule, no strong impression should be made with water, externally or internally, within about three hours after a meal. A bath upon a full stomach may be very injurious. But if there is indigestion, colic, or inflammation, water should be used at once, in a way suited to the case.

Perspiration caused by the envelope-

ment, or by vapor baths, does not come within Dr. Currie's rules. It is well known that a cool or cold bath rightly taken is not dangerous immediately after sweating, if this is not caused by over-exertion.

Air and Exercise.

It will be observed that these important adjuncts to any kind of treatment, share largely in the water-cure. Priessnitz insists that all who are able shall take an abundance of out-door exercise regularly. The value of such exercise is inestimable. Every one who observes at all respecting it, knows the invigorating effect it has upon the system. The cases given by different authors in this work will furnish sufficient directions in reference to these adjuncts:

"Priessnitz's first endeavor is to alleviate pain, so that the patients may avail themselves of air and exercise. How far this object is attained may be judged of, from the circumstances that out of 500 or 600, the usual average number of patients under his charge, there are seldom a dozen of persons in bed at one time. If their complaint be fever, he is so completely master of the case, that no one ever keeps his bed, and seldom his room, for more than two or three days, excepting in cases of typhus, a malady which generally takes twelve or fourteen days to eradicate, but hardly ever longer. The same remark will apply to rheumatism. If the sufferer can only reach Graefenberg, he may be sure of immediate relief, such as elsewhere would be called a cure, and which is repeated many times a year; but the cure can only be regarded then as just commenced, it being Priessnitz's object to eradicate the cause of malady from the system. What is understood by a cure at Graefenberg, is a perfect cleansing of the body of all impurities, a radical cure of that which has been the source of disease. Cases of very long standing succumb to the treatment, sometimes in two or three months; others resist for one or two years. Supposing, for example, a young man to be attacked by gout, let him apply to Priessnitz, and he will be cured immediately; but another, who has inherited it from his family, and who has been a *bon vivant* himself for a number of years, cannot expect to be made a new man, but with the

exercise of patience; yet he will have this satisfaction, that during the cure he will find himself, in other respects, in perfect health, never be confined to his room, and be able to take plenty of exercise."—*Captain Claridge.*

Clothing.

Priessnitz requires of his patients that they lay aside their flannel and cotton. He holds "that they weaken the skin, render people delicate, and less able to contend against atmospheric changes." When objections are made, he says, "Wear it, then, over your shirt; but when you are accustomed to cold water, you will not miss it. After the bath, which you have now taken, run or walk until you provoke perspiration. You need then have no fear of catching cold."

Diet.

Some who advocate the water-cure, as practised by Priessnitz, have made objections to the diet. It is not pretended but that it is improveable. When it is said of his patients that "they eat too much," it is only saying what is true of civilized man the world over. When Professor Mott of this city, (New York,) in one of his lectures, said there was as much need of temperate eating societies, as there was of temperate drinking societies, he by no means meant to be understood as placing a low estimate upon popular temperance societies; he was fully aware of the undeniable fact, that excessive alimentation is a most fruitful source of disease. Admitting that the diet at Graefenberg is not in all respects what it should be, as it is not, to obtain the best results in treating disease, it only goes the more strongly to prove the power and value of the water-cure. In some important particulars Priessnitz has shown his good sense and judgment, all must admit, who are well informed on the subject of diet. "He deprecates all exciting things, such as tea, coffee, wines and spirits, and recommends cold aliments rather than hot. A rule for dieting (in disease, second in importance to no other,) is that which relates to *quantity*. In the process of starvation, it is a well-known principle, that the substances or parts of the body least essential to life are the first to be wasted, and on this same

principle, in cases of shipwreck and other accidents, tumors have been known to disappear rapidly, and old ulcers to heal in a very short time, with those who have been thus subjected. This rule, of course, will not apply in *all* cases of disease.

"I know of a gentleman," says Dr. Edward Johnson, "who was entirely cured of an obstinate permanent stricture by adopting a very severe course of abstinence, as it regards both food and drink, for two or three weeks. I am also acquainted with several other very severe cases of disease, entirely cured by the rigorous adoption of a severe diet—but *always in connexion with a very mild course of the water-treatment.*"

Diet and Digestion.

The following rules are drawn from Dr. Beaumont's well known Observations and Experiments, perseveringly made upon a healthy young man, whose stomach was exposed by a wound which healed, leaving an external opening. The rules are valuable for all, whether sick or well.

1. Bulk is nearly as necessary to the articles of diet as the nutrient principle. They should be so managed that one will be in proportion to the other. Too highly nutritive diet is probably as fatal to life and health as that which is insufficient in nourishment.

2. The more plain and simple the preparation of food, and the less seasonings of any kind, the better for the health. Stimulating condiments, (salt, pepper, vinegar, mustard, &c.,) instead of being used with impunity, are actually prejudicial to the healthy stomach. Though they may assist the action of a debilitated stomach for a time, their continued use never fails to produce an indirect debility of that organ. They affect it like alcohol or other stimulants.—The present relief afforded is at the expense of future suffering.

3. Thorough mastication and slow swallowing are of great importance.

4. A due *quantity* of food is of the utmost importance. There is no subject of dietetic economy, says Dr. B., about which people are so much in error, as that which relates to *quantity*. Dyspepsia is oftener the effect of overeating and overdrinking, than any cause.

5. Solid food, if properly masticated, is more easy of digestion than soups and broths.

6. Butter, fat meat, and all oily substances, being always hard of digestion, tending to derangement of the stomach, are better omitted.

7. Alcoholic liquors of every form, the various stimulating condiments, as mustard, pepper, spice, &c., tea, coffee, and narcotics of every kind, all tend to debility, derangement, and disease of the stomach, and, through it, of the whole system.

8. Simple pure water is the only fluid necessary for drink, or for the wants of the system. The artificial drinks are all more or less injurious. "*Tea and coffee*," says Dr. B., "the common beverage of all classes of people, have a tendency to debilitate the digestive organs. Let any one who is in the habit of drinking either of these articles in a weak decoction, take two or three cups, made very strong, and he will soon be aware of their injurious tendency; and this is only an *addition* to the strength of the narcotic which he is in the constant habit of using.

9. Violent exercise very soon after a full meal is injurious, but gentle exercise promotes digestion. Sleep soon after a meal is better avoided.

10. Strong mental exercise and emotions of the mind, as grief, anger, fear, &c., particularly with a full stomach, tend to impair digestion.

The Crisis.

One most remarkable feature in the water-cure, is the Crisis, as it is termed. It is said that at Graefenberg it is really amusing to observe with what anxiety it is looked for by the patients. In most cases it proves the certain harbinger of a good cure. "The patients themselves are constant witnesses of this fact, and it is no wonder, therefore, that they should look forward with pleasure and hope to its advent in their own persons. A patient is no sooner missed from the table, than the question goes round, 'Has so-and-so got a crisis?' And if the reply be in the affirmative, the report spreads like the news of a fresh victory, and his friends assemble around him—not with long faces to condole him—but with merry smiles, and

laughing jests, to congratulate him on his happy fortune." "The following allegorical lines from Southey," says Capt. Claridge, "might with great justice be literally applied, by the individual who has passed through the crisis, and been restored to health :—"

"Most blessed water! Neither tongue can tell
The blessedness thereof, nor heart can think,
Save only those to whom it hath been given
To taste of that divinest gift of heaven.
I stopped and drank of that divinest well,
Fresh from the rock of ages where it ran;
It had a heavenly quality to quell
All pain. I rose a renovated man;
And would not now, when that relief was known,
For worlds the needful suffering have foregone."

"The crisis is generally ushered in by a sense of uneasiness, a loss of sleep and appetite, an alternate change from heat and cold, and lastly by all the symptoms of fever, which is sometimes violent, but always of short duration, if properly attended to. At its termination, the alvine and other evacuations are more plentiful, and accompanied by a more copious separation of extraneous matter than ordinarily; sometimes by several of the excretory passages at the same time. This increased secretion is generally accompanied by a variety of eruptions of the skin, by boils, abscesses, ulcers, &c."

"The term crisis applies to any very marked disturbance of the system, or cutaneous change; as the crisis fever, odorous perspiration, odorous urine, vomitings, diarrhœa, hæmorrhoidal discharge of blood, and various kinds of eruption on the skin."

In very many cases of cure, there is said to be no perceptible crisis of any kind. There appears to be no very general rule respecting it. In some old and obstinate cases of gout, mercurialism, &c., it may take place as many as from three to five times, before the cessation of the disease, and the re-establishment of perfect health.

Whenever there is in the human system great heat *attended with much fatigue*, a cold bath is dangerous, and will often under such circumstances be attended with fatal results. The same rule applies also to the drinking freely of cold water. A sensation of warmth should always be present when cold water is used.

WATER-CURE JOURNAL.

NEW YORK, JULY 15, 1846.

THE DANGEROUS EFFECT OF WATER UNDER CERTAIN CIRCUMSTANCES, CAUSED BY FATIGUE, AND NOT BY EXCESS OF HEAT.

There is a general belief that the use of cold water is dangerous, whenever there is in the living body an excess of heat. Every summer numbers of persons lose their lives, as is believed, in this way. The illustrious Franklin appears to have adopted the notion that the danger in the use of cold water is, because of heat. He says, in an essay on swimming—an exercise of which he was exceedingly fond—that, “during the great heat of summer there is no danger of bathing, however warm we may be, in rivers which have been thoroughly warmed by the sun. But to throw ourselves into cold spring water, when the body has been heated by exercise in the sun, is an imprudence which may prove fatal. I once knew an instance of four young men, who, having worked at harvest in the heat of the day, and with a view of refreshing themselves, plunged into a spring of cold water; two died on the spot, a third the next morning, and the fourth recovered with great difficulty. A copious draught of cold water, in the same circumstances, is often attended with the same effect in North America.”

In consequence of this popular fallacy, it has generally been looked upon as being perfectly hazardous for a person with burning fever to use cold water. The same error obtains concerning both internal and external applications. This delusion has passed through all ranks and grades of civilized society, so called, and so far as we know, through all periods of time, since the art of medicine began. True, there were here and there exceptions, but such has

been the general rule; and thousands upon thousands in every enlightened country have died merely from the want of simple cold water. Even at this time, every one who has arrived at the age of twenty, can easily call to mind instances in which persons were given up to die of fever, and yet when the natural instinct for cold water was gratified, and this to the full extent, the patient has quickly recovered, notwithstanding he had been told most strenuously that such a practice would prove his certain death. Who has ever known the free and full quenching of thirst with pure cold water, in fever of whatever name or kind, to cause the least injury? But thousands have thus been saved when the imperiousness of instinct overcame resolution, and stealthily the patient acted in opposition to the wisdom of men. It is then plainly, not because of *heat*, that cold water injures, but because of exhaustion and fatigue.

Since, however, persons have often been suddenly destroyed by the use of cold water in *hot* seasons, it is not very surprising that the delusion we are endeavoring to set forth has taken place; and yet, with all the array of facts in history, and the means conveniently at hand for scientific experiment, it is indeed unaccountable that such errors should so generally have obtained, except on the ground of an almost entire want of *observation of facts*. Over against this delusion are the well known facts, that the ancient Romans practised often, the going suddenly from their sudatorium or sweating bath to a cold one. The Russians have from time immemorial practised in the same way, and so also the Indians of our own country. Scientific experimenters also at different times have passed from an atmosphere heated very considerably above the natural temperature of the body, and plunged into cold water with perfect safety.

In illustration of our position, that it is because of fatigue, and not heat, in the system, that the use of cold water is, under certain conditions, dangerous, we will cite a case that came lately under our own observation. An elderly gentleman of this city, a patient for whom we had often prescribed, had an illness that resulted in a considerable and somewhat protracted debility. On the morning of one of the warmest days of the season, he took, as usual, a cold shower-bath, and experienced the most beneficial effects. Going about town on business during the hot forenoon, much more than he had of late been accustomed to do, he became fatigued. Returning home in the middle of the day, he thought, as the bath had been so refreshing in the morning, he would again repeat it. On coming from it, he experienced a general chill and lassitude, instead of the pleasant and refreshing effect obtained in the morning; and, notwithstanding he caused himself to be wrapped in woollen blankets, the chill and lassitude remained. Having a strong appetite, and which was increased by the exercise he had gone through, he took a dinner perhaps more hearty than usual. Still the lassitude and chilliness remained, and, in some two hours after the bath, a sinking sensation was experienced, attended with heat and pain in the abdomen, and very soon followed by a most alarming and dangerous hæmorrhage from the bowels. The system, it must be admitted, was weak, and the dinner were better omitted; but still there cannot, we believe, be a doubt that the exciting cause of the hæmorrhage was the cold bath taken when the system was in too great fatigue. Almost every one can call to mind times when, under fatigue, they have passed into cold water, and have experienced more or less injury thereby.

Dr. Currie, of whose valuable work we

have before spoken, gives an example which so well illustrates this position, that we shall quote it at length. He says:

On the first of September, 1778, two students of medicine of Edinburgh set out on foot on a journey, a considerable part of which lay along one of the rivers of Scotland. They started by sunrise, and proceeded with alacrity in the cool of the morning. At the end of eight miles they breakfasted, rested for an hour, and then resumed their journey. The day grew warm as it advanced, and, after a march of eight miles more, they arrived, heated, but not fatigued, on the banks of the river above mentioned, about eleven in the forenoon. Urged by the fervor of the day, and tempted by the beauty of the stream, they stripped instantly, and threw themselves into the river. The utmost refreshment followed, and, when they retired to the neighboring inn, this was succeeded by a disposition to sleep, which they indulged. In the afternoon they proceeded, and travelling sixteen miles at a single stretch, arrived at the inn where they were to sleep, a little after sunset. The afternoon had been warm, and they sweated profusely; but the evening was temperate and rather cool. They had travelled for some miles slowly, and arrived at the end of their journey stiffened and wearied with their exercise.

The refreshment which they had experienced in the morning from bathing, induced, however, one of them to repeat the experiment; and he went perfectly cool into the same river, expecting to relax his limbs in the water, and afterwards to enjoy profound sleep. The consequences were different. The Tweed, which was so refreshing in the morning, now felt extremely cold, and he left the water hastily. No genial glow succeeded, but a feverish chill remained for some time, with small frequent pulse, and flying pains over the body. Warm liquids and friction brought on at length considerable heat, and, towards morning, perspiration and sleep followed. Next day about noon they proceeded on foot, but the traveller who had bathed was extremely feeble; and though they had to perform the journey of a single stage only, as some part of it was difficult and mountainous, he was

obliged to take the assistance of a carriage which overtook them on the road. It was several days before he recovered his usual vigor.

From the above facts and observations we may then institute the following rules :

1. *That no powerful impression is to be made upon the system either internally or externally, when there is present a considerable degree of exhaustion or fatigue.*

2. *That at least a comfortable state of warmth should be present whenever such impressions are made, and that the salutary effects of cold water are always in proportion to the amount of increase of heat, provided there is no fatigue.*

TOOTH-ACHE.

Tooth-ache, properly so called, arises from a swollen condition of the nerve which occupies the centre of the tooth, and is caused by exposure to an unnatural element. When the decay reaches the nerve, it is exposed, and becomes inflamed and swollen, and the tooth being a dense hard substance, and not pliant or elastic, like those parts in our bodies which surround other nerves, does not expand, and the nerve, although much enlarged by the inflammation, is still confined in its natural cavity, causing that violent beating or throbbing sensation, often so great as to deprive those thus afflicted of all rest, and even the proper exercise of their reason. As the nerves of the teeth communicate with the brain, they transmit the inflammation to that delicate organ, thus affecting more or less the reason. If you have ever had a tight ring on a swollen finger, you will readily understand this subject. The ring will not accommodate itself to the size of the finger, which necessarily becomes more and more inflamed while the ring remains, but as soon as it is removed, the pain and irritability subside; and it is so with the tooth. Should the tooth be split, the nerve would then be free from external pressure, and the pain would immediately cease. There is another cause of pain from the teeth, which proceeds from an inflammation of the vascular membrane

which surrounds the roots of the teeth. Vascular is derived from the Latin word *vasculum*, a vessel. It means full of vessels, or pertaining to vessels. The sockets which contain the roots of the teeth are lined with little blood vessels, that supply the teeth with vitality. These little vessels become diseased by the system being over-stimulated, by excessive eating and drinking, thus filling them to such a degree as to cause inflammation and swelling of the membrane, which, pressing between the sockets and the tooth, throws it up, and produces the feeling, when closing the jaws, that the tooth is much longer than formerly. Gum-boils, and ulcers at the roots of teeth, are only an extension of this diseased state of the membrane. Actual experience proves beyond a doubt that these diseases are the results of excess, and the very word *boil* seems to refer to fever or heat produced by excess of stimulants.

And now, as I have described the cause of this pain, I shall go a little farther and define the word pain. It means *penalty*; and, as a penalty cannot be righteously inflicted without a violation of law, your own reason must decide we have some responsibility in these matters. I mean, that if we know the causes which lead to these painful results, we are guilty if we neglect to profit by this information, and must bear the censure as well as the penalty attached to our transgressions. God has declared he does not grieve or afflict willingly, but our transgressions are visited upon us, and not his wrath. He has established it as a law, throughout his universal dominion, that all violations of law, whether they relate chiefly to the body or the mind, shall have their just recompense or reward.

JOHN BURDELL, *Dentist*,
No. 2 Union Square, New York.

✂ We are glad to learn that Dr. A. Underhill has returned to *Massillon, Ohio*, and is actively engaged in the Water-Cure practice at that place. The Doctor is thoroughly acquainted with the system, and had years of extensive practice in the old modes as well; a circumstance which renders him a far more efficient practitioner than any beginner, however well qualified, could be.

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